

**SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**

Joint Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 11th May 2022 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Welcome

CLlr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that it was good to be back to meeting properly face to face having not been able to do throughout Covid.

2. Present

CLlr Herrick (Chairman Smeeth Parish Council), Cllr Harbottle (Chairman Brabourne Parish Council), Cllr Mrs Morey, Cllrs Denyer and Baker (Smeeth Parish Council); Cllr Mrs Smith, Cllr Atkins (Brabourne Parish Council), and Mrs T Block (Clerk). Cllr Howard (Borough Councillor) was also present. Nineteen members of the public attended.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Jacqui Fortescue, Geoff Thorpe, Di Dawson, Graham Snazelle, and Dave Jones, Cllrs Mrs Alford and Pereboom (Smeeth Parish Council), Cllr Spokes (Brabourne Parish Council) and Cllr Mrs Bell (County Councillor).

4. Minutes of the 2019 Joint Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the 2019 Joint Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed.

5. Smeeth Parish Council Chairman's Report

As a result of Covid there was no Joint Annual Parish Meeting in either of the years ending March 2020 or March 2021 and accordingly this Report covers both those years, together with the year ending March 2022.

Sadly, those years have seen the passing of both Mike Hickmott, Chairman of Brabourne Parish Council, and most recently Michael Hinchliffe, one time Smeeth Parish Councillor and more recently Secretary of the Community Led Plan Group. It cannot be stated too strongly the worth of the contributions both of these men made to the villages of Brabourne and Smeeth, with timely tributes having already appeared in various media. Both are sorely missed.

The passage of time has also seen several changes in respect of Smeeth Parish Council. Our Clerk, Sue Wood, retired in 2020 to be admirably replaced by Tracey Block, and a number of Councillors have moved on and subsequently been replaced. To everyone, both old and new, and especially Tracey (who keeps us all both informed and in order), I should like to extend my thanks for their support and contributions over the three years.

As ever thanks must also go to our Ashford Borough Council Ward Member, Councillor William Howard, and Councillor Mrs Clair Bell, our Kent County Council Councillor, for their support and informative inputs.

Many key issues, both within the Parish and further afield, have received attention during the course of the years in question and these are fully documented in the Parish Council's meetings' Minutes, which can be found on the Smeeth Parish Council website. If there are any particular issues which residents require further details on, our Parish Clerk will be pleased to provide any available information held by the Parish Council.

It is timely to remember that everything the Parish Council does is intended for the benefit of local residents. For those who have not yet been able to attend any Parish Council meetings, they are held bi-monthly at Brabourne Baptist Church, on Wednesday evenings (usually the first or second Wednesday of the month) at 7.00pm. Dates are detailed on the Parish Council noticeboard on The Warren and on the Parish Council's website.

David Herrick
Chairman - Smeeth Parish Council

6. Brabourne Parish Council Chairman's Report

It has been a very sombre year for all concerned following the sudden and tragic passing of Mike Hickmott in May 2021 and our thoughts continue to be with Mike's family. In memory of Mike, the Village Hall Committee, following discussions with the Parish Council, has very kindly agreed to the renaming of the Main Hall at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall to "Hickmott Hall". There will be a naming event in due course. It is hoped that this will be a fitting tribute to Mike, who gave a lifetime of dedication to our Parishes.

To our Clerk, Tracey Block, I would like to say thank you for all the hard work that you have done for the Parish Council over the course of the past 12 months. Without the work that you do for the Council on a day-to-day basis, including managing the Council's communications and finances, advising on procedural matters, to name but a few areas of responsibility, the Parish Council simply could not function.

To fellow Councillors, I would like to say thank you for the time and effort that you have dedicated to the Parish Council over the last 12 months, including for all your thoughts and views on the issues that we have discussed. Ultimately, it is via our collective local knowledge and expertise that the Parish Council is able to serve the community to the extent that it does.

With regards to Parish Council activities over the last 12 months, the Council returned to face-to-face meetings in July 2021 following an extended period of holding virtual meetings due to Covid. In terms of agenda items, the Parish Council has agreed a Highways Improvement Plan, taking forward the main issues of traffic speed near Brabourne School and village entrance signage. The allotments continue to be popular and a new tenancy agreement for plot holders was drawn up in 2021. The Village Caretaker Scheme also continues to run well and particular thanks must go to our caretaker, Paul Rodway, for all his work in the Parishes over the past year. At the request of the Borough Council, a survey of amenity streetlighting in the Parish was also carried out in 2021 and the way forward on that issue is still awaited from the Borough Council. On planning matters, the Parish Council has considered approximately 40 applications over the last 12 months, including a proposed distillery along The Street in East Brabourne (21/01862/AS) and a proposed dwelling of exceptional design at Liberty Barn along Canterbury Road, also in East Brabourne (22/00136/AS). In addition, the Parish Council conducted a review of its policies relating to planning and has also responded to the Borough Council Land Mapping Commission's Questionnaire.

Members of the public are, as always, warmly invited to attend Parish Council meetings. Members of the public are also warmly invited to share their views with the Parish Council on any matters of concern, including formal agenda items, either in person at a Parish Council meeting or in writing by emailing the Clerk. All the necessary contact details and relevant information can be found on our website and on the Parish Councils' noticeboard.

7. Financial Report

The draft accounts for the period April 2021-March 2022 were presented and are attached to the Minutes. Smeeth Parish Council: This is the lead council in the village caretaker scheme, therefore the caretaker's salary, pension contributions and running costs are shown. The other 3 parishes in the cluster (Brabourne, Brook and Mersham) contribute to the scheme, pro rata by population size, and ABC and KCC pay £5000 and £8883.56 respectively into the scheme. In addition, some extra work has been picked up at Smeeth School and Brook Museum which brings in extra income. Smeeth field is located on the Romney Marsh and is let for grazing.

Brabourne Parish Council: The loan from Ashford Borough Council plus the interest incurred was paid back in full at the end of March. The Parish Council will be able to reassess the Precept at the November meeting.

8. Reports from local organisations

8.1 Community Led Plan group (Richard Graham)

I have prepared many Reports over a long career covering technical and commercial aspects and indeed for a number of Voluntary Organisations I have had the honour to serve and in the 42 years we have lived in Brabourne Lees, this includes 20 years running the Scout Group, many years as Vice Chair and Chairman of the local Branch of the Royal British Legion but none have proved as difficult to prepare as this one on the Community Led Plan!

In all the Committees I have served on it has always been those with an efficient Secretary that have proven the most effective and none more so than the work of the late Michael Hinchliffe as the CLP

Secretary. So in starting this report I must pay absolute tribute to his dedication and support to all our efforts for the CLP, without him I doubt we would have enjoyed the successes we have seen. It is also a fact that without a good team of folk who have served on the Committee since our start several years ago we could not succeed, so to all those members past and present I owe you a huge vote of thanks!

When we started it was all about Surveys in the Community, what did our cross section of inhabitants in the villages need both young and old? We covered so much ground from Bus Services, Footpaths, Affordable Housing, Better facilities for young people, Speeding and so on. Perhaps one of the most valuable in my opinion was the incredible input we received with regard to the elderly and vulnerable in our community and in the event of major emergencies what skills and useful equipment might be available to hand if needed. Sadly, Data Protection Rules put paid to that but as time has passed and with the advent of our community pages on Facebook it is possible to see just how much kindness and help is given when required to others in need by this community.

From those surveys we were able to flesh out some worthwhile projects and some spin offs that are of benefit to us all. One of those spin offs was a greater attention to speeding in the village/s and the Speedwatch team of volunteers and their equipment was augmented, not by the CLP but due to the greater awareness our surveys produced. As with all Voluntary work if people fail to come forward to help then these good things will wither and die.

We also played a part in getting a Defibrillator supplied and installed at the outside of the village shop and a generous company known only to me supplied the weatherproof casing to protect it.

These things tend to get forgotten with the passage of time but they certainly owe much of their roots to the CLP.

So, moving on there are certainly tangible signs of our activities now present in the Village/s.

One is the Basketball Net, installed at the Playing Field which has served the youngsters well. We were also mindful of the need to protect the houses in the Ridgeway from rogue balls flying onto their property. So the fence was constructed with netting to prevent this, sadly it has not proved to be quite high enough so we decided to raise it even further but this was delayed over the last two years by the advent of Covid 19, even though the materials were ordered and supplied by Jackson Fencing; simply we could not expect our team of volunteers to carry out the work during the various Lockdowns and rules imposed. Now we are proceeding to retrieve the additional netting and poles from storage and hope to complete the work sometime this year which we trust will satisfy the log suffering householders nearby.

Everyone who passes by the Warren or Village Green cannot fail to notice the Outdoor Gym which Michael played a huge part in pulling together through grants and the generosity of our two PC's and ABC among others. This was a great team effort on the part of our team of volunteers who dug foundations for the mounting plinths, cast the plinths and mounted the equipment in place. We only had one complaint from the public and that was the shade of green on the climbing frame! Over the last two years of the Covid virus it has perhaps been underused but is all there in good order for our community to further enjoy.

In Church Road the CLP team were very active too, clearing the pond of unwanted weed and slime, etc, plus the surrounding bushes cleared back thanks to Laurence Archer and his demonic chainsaw! It was finally possible to see clear, clean water. It was not left at that and the railings both sides of the road were cleaned, prepped and both sides repainted with some small parts, thanks to Covid, still to finish.

Other projects on the Community wish list /possibles are as follows:

Village Green Shelter.

Village Green /Bridge Road Footpath.

Lamp post painting.

Woolpack Hill widening to improve pedestrian safety.

And a couple of ideas from our resourceful Gary Birch:

Village Gateway posts and fencing to all main entrances to Brabourne & Smeeth.

A new Community Noticeboard outside Orpins Stores which Gary is following up.

So, there you have it; the tip of an iceberg in completed, near completed projects but it is the vast amount of work unseen to achieve this for which we owe so much to Michael and the rest of the team.

What of the future?

As we have seen sadly, we are all mortals and the passing of Michael focussed this, I am approaching 78 and not in the best of health, our Treasurer David Eldridge who has been superb in that role also is feeling he is time served. We sincerely feel that unless there are some fresh and younger faces to come forward from the community then the work of the CLP ahead is in serious doubt. It is unfair to expect our team to continue without others stepping up.

Meantime, immediately we wish to be able to remember the significant part Michael Hinchliffe has played in our community with his family's complete agreement through a Memorial Bench to go on the Village Green. We wholeheartedly agree that it should be of recycled material and some suitable items have been identified at an estimated value installed of circa £1200. This is something we all wish to contribute to and if required happy to run a coffee morning to help raise funds.

Richard Graham,
Chairman Community Led Plan for Brabourne and Smeeth.

8.2 Gardeners' Society (Brian Sanders)

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic, 2021 was another successful year for the Society with six Zoom presentations in the first half of the year; unfortunately, it was not possible to stage the annual Plant Sale or the Summer Show. However, "near normal" activities were resumed in July with American-style lunches held over two days in a committee member's house in lieu of the Summer Supper, a presentation by George Jessel in August and a very successful Autumn Show in September. The AGM was held in October and the year rounded off with a pre-Christmas dinner in the village hall attended by over fifty members.

To date we have seventy-eight members and our programme for 2022 includes a visit to Pashley Manor and Merrimants gardens with a further trip to RHS Hyde Hall in September, two "Wine & Wander" evenings and we will be staging five shows, competitions and a plant sale plus seven presentations on various garden-related subjects. A copy of the Society's Yearbook & Schedule, giving more details of the visits, shows and presentations, is attached to the electronic version of this report.

The chairman and secretary stepped down at October's AGM; to date no volunteers have come forward to fill the vacancies. The remaining committee members were re-elected unanimously, have taken on the various chairman and secretarial responsibilities and the Society continues to function very efficiently.

The Society's association with Brabourne Primary School continues to be developed with a number of members helping to clear the school garden and install raised beds for the pupils to plant vegetables and fruit. It is hoped that the children will be able to provide entries for the Summer Show to be held on Saturday 9 July. The recent proposal that small groups of children be invited to visit members' gardens and, where appropriate and practical, carry out simple gardening tasks is still under consideration.

The Society's own website is firmly established [at www.basgs.com]; once again the committees thanks to our member Simon Cavell for designing, setting up and maintaining the site.

In order to protect the privacy of members the Society continues to follow procedures satisfying the requirements of the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018; documentation, etc. is reviewed annually.

The Society meets on the last Friday of each month [except December] in the village hall at 7:15 for a 7:30 pm start. As noted above we have a varied and interesting programme for 2022, the membership fee is only £10.00 per person per annum, and all are welcome! Any enquiries for further information should be directed to our treasurer Rick Smithson on 01303 812 740 or email smithson.richard@yahoo.com.

8.3 Brabourne Baptist Church (Corinne Herrick on behalf of Geoff Thorpe)

A brief summary of Brabourne Baptist Church activities last year.

The church never closed during covid doing services and prayer mornings via zoom.

We reopened the church building to the public in July but also continued to duplicate all meetings, prayer and services on zoom.

We recommenced the Wednesday Oasis coffee morning in September.

To start with people were reticent to return enter the church building numbers have slowly increased to 80% of precovid values.

We have 4 church home groups who meet regularly in people's houses in the village for bible study and prayer

The church actively financially supports 2 food banks in Ashford for families who are struggling in the present crisis.

We have no full-time pastor at the moment but we are led by the retired minister Jerry Newson from Aldington

The side hall at the church building has been refurbished and modernised and is for hire to anyone in the villages.

8.4 1st Brabourne and Smeeth Scout Group (Jon Rose)

I am pleased to report that the Scout Group is in good heart.

In the last year we have provided a wide range of activities for the members of our organisation. Membership remains good with just under 50 young people on our books as at the end of January. This number has since been steadily increasing as life has returned towards normal. In addition, the Explorers have about 12 members.

Given the challenges of the pandemic, lock downs, online meetings, etc. we are extremely pleased that membership has held up. This has been challenging for all of us as Young People were faced with another online Scouting meeting after a day's remote teaching. Not easy for all of us and something that created a steep learning curve for us all.

Our Beavers have maintained a good membership of 15 and I have now been leading the section for about 2 ½ years. I am delighted to report that 5 adults have now stepped forward to keep the section open. Membership is good and we still have a waiting list of young people waiting to join as soon as they are old enough. Now that the future is secured, we can invite them to join us.

Cubs are reduced in number as 6 have just moved to Scouts. However we are sending 4 Beavers to Cubs imminently. Katrina Devenport continues to lead this section with Hester Fenwick and is in urgent need of additional leaders as others have moved on as their children have gone on to scouts. We are facing the same closure risks as we have faced with Beavers as Katrina, after 10 years in charge, wants to take a step back.

I continue to lead Scouts (despite repeated intentions to retire!) We have a good strength Scout leadership team and 28 Young People. The highlight of our year was getting back to camping again.

We visited Knowler Farm at Stelling Minnis in October which turned out to be a bizarre weekend of hot sun, wind and torrential rain!

We have just returned from our latest camp at Stanford where half of the 20 Scouts attending had never camped at all before. This was due to the pandemic restricting any camping activity. Normally our Cubs would have done 1 or 2 camps before coming to Scouts.

Mountbatten Explorers (not part of the group but “honorary” members) have faced an ongoing challenge in trying to find a leader. Sarah Hutt leads the Explorers these days but is very much in need of help.

A number of our Explorers have completed their Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards in the last year which is a great achievement for which we congratulate them. Several of them are section Young Leaders, volunteering with Beavers, Cubs and Scouts which gives them some experience of leadership and developing skills for life.

This Summer will see 30 of our members attending Kent International Jamboree at Detling. This is a great opportunity for them to experience new activities and to make new friends with Scouts & Explorers from elsewhere in the UK and abroad. We anticipate there will be about 4-5,000 people camping for a week.

Given the current economic situation we can envisage that some of our families will need support from the group to enable their children to take part in activities in the next period.

As you will have gathered, our challenge is securing adult volunteers to keep our sections open. We have not encountered any problems with new young members which is a tribute to the varied and challenging programme run by the section leaders. We are indebted to our volunteers and supporters without whom we could not offer Scouting in Brabourne & Smeeth.

Thank you

The Scout Group is extremely appreciative of the support provided by both Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils. It enables us to continue to provide great opportunities for our members.

Community involvement

We are open to ideas for more community involvement for our young people where helping others is a key part of their badge requirements.

8.5 Playing Field Association - no report

8.6 Village Hall (read by Mr D Smith on behalf of Jacqui Fortescue)

We were running along quite nicely in January & February 2020 with regular users every weekday as well as our regular monthly clubs and societies but of course that all changed in March 2020 when we went into the first national lockdown and there was no use of the hall at all.

As the pandemic took hold and the Government reacted, it became apparent that we could claim government grants via Ashford Borough Council, which have come in stages throughout the year and have more than covered the shortfall of our income. We were able to purchase new curtains & blinds for the entire building, including new stage curtains and 52 stackable chairs complete with storage trolley.

We received further Covid-related Government grants throughout the following year. These have helped us purchase a sound system complete with hearing loop, projector and screen. We feel that this equipment will be useful to many regular hall users and hopefully attract others. We also purchased a steam cleaner for the floors; it leaves far less water on the floor than the traditional mop and bucket. We replaced the mat in the doorway of the main entrance, which makes the area more appealing. We have also installed security cameras over the car park.

The hall re-opened in May 2021, with some Covid-related protocols still in place (one way system etc). Users returned gradually since then, with an increased usage since Autumn 2021. The Covid restrictions have now been removed in accordance with Government guidelines but users are recommended to follow sensible safe practices going forward.

Some regular users have not returned since the pandemic but our regular users include Pilates classes, Dog Training, Sewing Group, Body Fitness Group, WI, Gardeners and Tai Chi.

Unfortunately, the tarmac surface of the car park was badly damaged by a heavy vehicle in May 2021, causing a large hole and lump of tarmac opposite "La Vale". We discovered that there was a water leak in the pipe belonging to the water company, next to our water meter. We have no idea how long it had been leaking but this had compounded the problem by weakening the subsoil in the area around the meter. We instructed a civil engineering company to make the necessary repairs, which were carried out in October 2021.

Our most recent purchase was the replacement heaters on the ceiling of the main hall. These offer a radiant heat, ideal for longer hire periods, and can be controlled by the thermostat on the wall in the hall

All in all, the Hall is looking better than ever and we are hoping this will encourage more one-off party bookings alongside our regular users. Bookings can be made at <https://hallbookingonline.com/brabourne>

I would also like to thank the local community for their continued support of the Village Hall and also thanks to both Parish Councils for their generous financial support, especially in such unusual and difficult times.

Finally, we were approached by Brabourne Parish Council to consider whether we would approve this main hall being named after Mike Hickmott in recognition of all the time and effort Mike had devoted to Brabourne and its community. We agreed wholeheartedly and so the hall in time will be referred to as the Hickmott Hall and a plaque will be installed in due course.

8.7 St Mary's Church, Smeeth (read by Rev. Chris Denyer, on behalf of Di Dawson)

The last year has, of course, been challenging for everyone. Since 2020 Smeeth Church has moved through total closure, which was far from popular with everyone, to now being back almost to normal. We have held services complete with masks and social distancing, one-way systems and no hymns. Smeeth was the first church in this area to sing outside so that hymns could again become an integral part of our worship.

However, the building use may have been restricted but other aspects of Smeeth Church life have been very active.

The Stour Downs, of which Smeeth is part, was amongst the first (and was the very first in this neck of the woods) to hold online services, streamed from Revd Chris's study, dining room or garden. Morning and Evening Prayer also happened daily online from early in the first lockdown. These services have continued throughout this year serving an additional online congregation.

The activities of the church at Smeeth have also continued and grown. Fridays @3 restarted at a different time of day and has become Tuesdays @10. This meeting is aimed at anyone who just wishes for an informal chat over coffee and biscuits. It coincides with a working party in the churchyard whose attendees keep the place looking beautiful, repair the odd bit of guttering or wall and generally seem to enjoy their weekly meet. This isn't officially a "man shed" but provides the same sort of companionship over a practical task. New attendees to both groups are always welcome.

Little Saints began at the end of March. This is a Mums and Toddlers group which meets once a month on each third Thursday in the Oak Room. Run by Mums for mums it looks to welcome anyone with pre-school children.

The Oak Room could sadly be little used during the Pandemic but activities are gradually returning. Graham Lilley's Art classes have resumed as has a Quilting group. Yoga sessions happen in the Oak Room and Ashford Counselling Service and Ashford Leisure trust use it for their management meetings. As many of you will know, the Oak Room is light and bright and a good small space in which to meet. Bookings are just coming in again for birthday parties for the very young and the rather less so – for whom it seems to work well.

Pastoral Care is at the heart of what Smeeth Church (and our sister churches) are about. This is not advertised loudly as that would be inappropriate but many people who live alone, are unwell or challenged in one way or another, are visited or telephoned by someone in the church community. If you know of somebody who needs us – just ask. Our local food bank continues, sadly, to be much needed and has slightly extended its boundaries so help is given where it is needed beyond simply food. We are currently also collecting clothes and food for Ukrainian refugees.

Music is very important at Smeeth Church - the congregation enjoys singing. We are fortunate to have two good organists and others who have been known to make a not totally tuneless noise emerge from the church organ when there has been a need. We have recently begun to offer a Songs of Praise on the third Sunday of each month at 4.00pm. Just a good sing of those hymns which are chosen on the day. It is informal and friendly and, of course, followed by coffee/tea in the Oak Room. So many things could not happen last year in the music world at Smeeth and beyond but these are slowly returning.

In Holy Week we were pleased to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury to some services within our group of churches and the Question and Answer session held in the Woolpack proved very popular. Accompanying the Archbishop were four members of the Community of St Anselm. These people – all young and enthusiastic, spend a year based at Lambeth Palace and some of the congregation shared a meal with them in the Oak Room.

A highlight of this year has been welcoming Revd Susan Manners to our Parish as a curate. Revd Susan lives in the rectory at Mersham but works across all our churches and is often seen in Smeeth.

Churches across the country are bemoaning the lack of funds in their coffers. Costs don't stop but closed churches, limited services and activities reduces income. However, Smeeth Church has never been other than a positive and optimistic establishment. Our congregation, surprisingly maybe, has not disappeared and some new people have joined us. Our mission continues to show our belief through our worship and also what we do to help others. Music concerts and other events are coming back so the future is bright.

Smeeth Church is open every day and visitors to both church and churchyard are always welcome.

8.8 Brabourne and Smeeth Guides and Brownies – no report received.

8.9 St Mary's Church, Brabourne – no report received.

8.10 Allotment Society (Peter De Lacey)

I took over as Chairman in April 2021, when several projects were on the go and required seeing through to completion.

The vehicular access gates were subsiding, so had to be repaired and a local firm was engaged to carry out the work. This was funded from the ring-fenced monies paid by the tenants to Brabourne Parish Council in rent.

A delivery of saplings was received via the PC, and these have been planted around the site, improving the local habitat and – in time – providing additional screening from the adjacent farm.

Redundant community plots have been converted into a wildflower meadow, complimenting the three other smaller ones already extant on the site.

With the move of land ownership from Shepherd Neame to the PC, the opportunity was taken to redraft the tenancy agreement, addressing the fact that some plot holders had not previously signed one.

Another benefit of the land transfer was the removal of restrictions imposed by SN, such as provision of a car park, which was hardly ever used. We have converted it into two additional plots, raising additional income for the PC.

At the change of the year, we welcomed five new plot holders to the site and we now have 35 members tending 42 plots.

For the future, we are looking to relay the access track, as it has been damaged by heavy vehicles.

8.11 Smeeth WI (Joy Taylor)

Smeeth W.I. were fortunate to have their meetings during Covid Lockdown period via Zoom. We enjoyed various Quiz sessions with prizes for winners and runners up. We also had two excellent talks via zoom which were entitled 'The Making of Casablanca' presented by David Allen and 'Mr. Garrick's Fireside' - a personal history of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane by Peter Allen.

It was a beautiful day when we were able to meet and have our twice postponed Summer trip to Tram Hatch Gardens at Charing Heath. This is a private garden immaculately maintained by Pam and Alan Scrivens. We were served an excellent afternoon tea in their spacious garden room 'The Cube' and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

In September we were able to return to the Village Hall for our meetings, the first Speaker being Margaret Hanlon, a fellow W.I. Member from Orlestone W.I. and she told us about the work at the Rare Breeds Centre, Woodchurch. The Trust at the Centre supports people with various disabilities but allowing them the opportunity to work.

Our October meeting was 'Pearls and Princesses' presented by Helen Kendal Tobias. Members were dressed to kill that evening as they heard all about Pearls.

November heralds our Annual Meeting and our Committee were all willing to stand again and continue with their excellent work for our W.I. We had recruited several new members as our W.I. got into full swing again which is always good news.

Jane Graham, longstanding member of Smeeth W.I. kindly demonstrated the art of Sugarcraft following our Annual Meeting business.

The New Year brought us a most interesting presentation by Julie Guthrie, another longstanding member, 'Sunflowers, Stars and Secret Loves' telling the story of Vincent Van Gough.

We made February meeting an Open Meeting as Hester Fenwick told us the story of 'Brabourne Vineyard - The story so far!' We had a very large audience who all had the opportunity to enjoy a glass of sparkling wine.

Helen Kendal Tobias returned in March to tell us 'Wrinkles don't matter' a fascinating insight into how you can look good no matter your age!

Last month we all tried our hand at drawing a tulip as Pearl Bostock renowned Botanical Artist came to talk and instruct us in an elementary lesson how you begin to draw flowers. There were some excellent results in our efforts.

Now that we have been able to meet up and go out together our Luncheon Club has been most popular. We meet every other month and have lunch at a local hostelry or restaurant and enjoy not only a hearty lunch but one another's' company too.

We have plans in hand for this coming year with outings to Godinton House and Gardens, Kentish Lady River Boat trip and Christmas will be welcomed with Mama Mia Christmas Party at the Mercure Great Danes Hotel.

We have chosen a tree to plant on the Warren for the Queen's Jubilee.

We are moving into another busy year with a full programme to look forward to enjoying.

8.12 Royal British Legion (George Taylor)

Much of the work of the British Legion branches is concerned with the Annual Poppy Appeal which underlines much of what we do for the rest of the year. Our preparation starts in earnest in September and this year following on as it did from previous years being restricted by the effects of covid was particularly satisfying and successful with well over £15,000 being raised to provide help for those former servicemen who need our help. We start again collecting in October and once again we hope that the improved situation will mean that we will do even better for this deserving cause.

The Kent Branch of the RBL was formed in 1922 and this year is celebrating therefore, its 100th Anniversary and is doing so in a number of ways in which our Branch will participate including Evensong in Canterbury Cathedral and a number of concerts around the area. Our Branch itself has had a full programme of events this year as we recover from the effects that covid had on our activities. We have enjoyed presentations from Rebecca Lilley on Sir Edwin Lutyens in February and a visit from the Kent Fire and Rescue team in March which was both entertaining and informative from which we learned how to protect ourselves and our property in the event of fire. Following a very enjoyable fish and chip lunch at the Woolpack we had a presentation in May from Major Jules Gomez the manager of the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne who not only told the story of the Memorial and its origins but had some interesting facts about the Battle itself. The rest of the year will be equally full starting with Hilary and Peter Joules coming to speak to us in June about Modern Dairy Farming and a full programme for the rest of the year culminating with our November celebrations and services around Remembrance Day.

As a branch we clearly have the interests of the charity at our heart, but as a village community we are equally concerned with comradeship and having a good time. Anyone who would like to support a lively village activity will be made most welcome at our Monthly meeting which are held at the Brabourne Baptist Church on the first Tuesday of every month

8.13 Speedwatch (read by D Herrick on behalf of Graham Snazelle)

Date	Site	AM/PM	Offenders	Vehicles	Letters Sent
Mon, 7 June	Church Road	PM	16	185	2
Thur, 10 June	Plain Rd, Trevone	AM	5	36	0
Mon, 14 June	Plain Rd, Warren Heights	AM	3	42	0
Fri, 18 June	Church Road	PM	12	266	2
Wed, 28 July	Plain Rd, Warren Heights	AM	2	38	0
Mon, 2 August	Church Road	PM	19	180	1
Wed, 29 Sept	Church Road	PM	12	188	2
Tues, 5 Oct	Church Road	PM	6	52	0
Mon, 18 Oct	Church Road	PM	24	178	2
Tues, 19 Oct	Plain Rd, Manor Leaze	AM	5	63	0
Tues, 26 Oct	Church Road	PM	25	172	1
Sat, 6 Nov	Church Road	AM	30	143	7

You will notice that the dates are well spread, which is due to the lack and/or unavailability of volunteers available, together with bad weather conditions when sessions had to be cancelled at the last minute. Since the beginning of November, a combination of bad weather, lack of volunteers and my own ill-health have prevented any further sessions taking place. However, I am hoping we will be able to resume in the next few weeks. I am pleased to report that 2 volunteers joined the group in the last quarter of 2021.

The site near Mountbatten Way has been de-registered by the police as the speed indicator device (SID) is so sensitive it was registering vehicles before they entered the 30-mph speed limit. The police have since approved a new site opposite Orpins for traffic passing in both directions, however I am not hopeful this will be a successful site, given its location and the number of parked vehicles.

8.14 Brabourne CEP School – no report

8.15 Smeeth CEP School – no report

8.16 Smeeth Sandpit Preservation Ltd Activities in the last 12 months (read by William Harbottle on behalf of Dave Jones)

Maintenance of the sandpit

The South Eastern Boundary. Significant restoration work was done on this boundary by relocating the access point, installing a kissing Gate and Fencing and the planting of a new hedgerow of native species. This was accomplished by a small team of volunteers using socially distanced methods when Covid restrictions were in place. All the saplings, tree guards and stakes were supplied to us by the Woodland Trust at no cost to the Company. We will be receiving further trees from the Woodland trust later this year.

Improving Disabled Access at the North end of the Sandpit. Access has been widened here which also allows baby buggy's to easily access the Sandpit. Later this year further improvements will take place and gates to allow disabled access will be installed.

Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy Project. Ashford Rotary Club have kindly provided 16 native species saplings, tree guards & posts as part of the Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy Project and together with children and representatives from Smeeth, Brabourne & Stowting Schools helped us plant the trees. A bench to mark the Jubilee has been constructed and added to the copse of trees.

Brush Cutting of Brambles in Certain Areas & Eradicate of Pernicious Weeds. Volunteers have regularly worked to control pernicious weeds such as Himalayan Balsam & Ragwort. Bramble areas are important for some wildlife but if left totally unchecked will choke other environments & footpaths and so have been regularly managed. In addition, volunteers have also removed rubbish & performed some vital tree surgery.

The Dog Waste Bin. A generous donation of a dog waste bin has been made by a local who would like to encourage all dog walkers to pick up their pet's waste and either take it home or use the bin, they have volunteered to empty it regularly and it is located at the north east entrance.

The Wildlife Pond.

The pond is a key part of the plan to increase wildlife diversity and hopefully provide a year-round water source.

Volunteers were able to start in late summer 2021 and the project to establish a pond has progressed well with the help of the weather which provided plenty of rain to fill it to capacity, an oval 13.5 x 8.5 m maximum with a depth at the deepest part of approximately 80cm.

The pond has been securely fenced and gated and signage has been erected to encourage dog walkers to keep their animals from entering the fenced area & warning of the danger to children. It is very important that as the pond becomes established dogs do not enter the water, we would appreciate it if all dog walkers helped us in this matter.

We have been advised by a nature consultancy that we should leave plant colonisation to occur naturally and so it should gradually settle into its surroundings.

We have also contacted 4 local primary head teachers to let them know about the new pond and the opportunity to visit. It is an exciting project to document the colonisation from scratch. Later this year a refresh of the website will take place with a section dedicated to the pond.

Reptiles

The reptiles relocated as part of the Company's involvement in a scheme to accept lizards and snakes from building development sites in the local area are now appearing as the weather is warming up. A number of shareholders have reported sightings of slow worms, sand lizards and grass snakes.

Birds & Mammals

Over the last couple of years, we have been involved in a feeding program for the vulnerable Turtle Dove to encourage breeding. The feeding program has now started for this year.

We have also continued helping various organisations with wildlife surveys. The latest being a recent visit by representatives from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. Dr Nikki Gammons will be visiting on a regular basis. Here is her recent tweet on the visit.

https://twitter.com/nikkigammans/status/1521396790070755333?s=20&t=N_8DJhnXqc dw3v2tHigmRg

The Final point I would add is the Company struggles to attract volunteers to help in the Sandpit and fill Director posts and we are always keen to hear from anyone who would like to help the company in any way they can as many of the volunteers are working full time and have busy lives.

9. County Councillor's report (report read by William Harbottle on behalf of Clair Bell)

Clair Bell, Kent County Councillor for Ashford Rural East, Annual Report April 2022

In February Kent County Council approved the budget for 2022-23. The council tax rise is just under 3% (including 1% Adult Social Care levy) which means for the average Band D property, KCC's element of

council tax increases from £1418 to £1461. The £150 rebate scheme is administered by Ashford Borough Council.

Colleagues at KCC agreed this was the hardest budget setting process any of us has known. The pressures and demands on council services this year are unprecedented and our funding sources are limited. Each 1% rise in council tax raises just £8m of funding for the council. The overall revenue budget is around £1.1 billion.

Local authorities have a legal duty to set a balanced and sustainable budget, across the council as a whole. KCC has to meet its statutory duties, for example in social care, which accounts for almost half of the total revenue budget, and in other areas too such as school transport for children with special educational needs. Government grants have reduced over the years and the council's ability to raise council tax is restricted. Councils are affected too by the increase in the cost of utilities etc.

All departments of the council have had to make savings and some of these have been very difficult and painful. For example, we have reduced the subsidy we offer to some bus companies, meaning certain bus services are no longer viable and are likely to be withdrawn. We recognise this will have a huge impact on some of our residents who rely on those services but we have little choice in the current circumstances. In my own Adult Social Care portfolio, I have had to cease a programme of support for homeless people, again with enormous regret, but we simply don't have the money to keep it going.

As I said, social care is a major part of the council's activity. Alongside dealing with the increased demand for social care and workforce shortages which our providers are experiencing, we are working hard with the local NHS on the new NHS structure, called the Integrated Care System, which is designed to make health and social care more joined up. Joint commissioning and pooling budgets are key elements of this with a strong focus on hospital discharge, to make best use of resources and improve the experience of patients. It is not an easy task – our two organisations are very different in terms of structure, responsibilities, funding etc. but I think we're making progress and good relationships are being established between the partners, which I believe is the key to success. Those partners include district councils, voluntary sector organisations, social enterprises and patient liaison groups. Together we are trying to move more in the direction of prevention, with a focus on supporting people in their communities, promoting independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, addressing social isolation and loneliness, and thus improving overall wellbeing and reducing the reliance on costly health and social care services. Tackling health inequalities is also high on the agenda.

Elsewhere in KCC we've seen a large increase in the number of children with special educational needs - up 20% - for whom we need to find school places and provide transport. Again, these are statutory responsibilities which we have to discharge before we consider what we can do in terms of discretionary services. But we have managed to find resource for extra things such as Reconnect, which is a project to support youngsters following the pandemic, helping them to catch up on missed learning, providing opportunities to engage in sports and activities, access to mental health support, and so regain confidence and have fun.

Now that we are coming out of the pandemic, which impacted every aspect of the council over the last 2 years, we are turning our attention to the future. KCC is the strategic authority for Kent and we are developing a Strategic Plan for the next 4 years, setting out how we will work as a council and with our partners to deliver better outcomes for Kent residents, businesses and communities and how we will respond to the government's agenda for Levelling Up and County Deals. We are looking at community infrastructure, such as libraries and children's centres, highways assets, digital connectivity and how we can improve support for schools, offer enhanced opportunities to develop skills for employment and make sure that vulnerable people are safe and have access to the services they need. One specific commitment is to support our rural communities and businesses which have distinctive challenges and opportunities. We want to explore innovation and technology and involve community and voluntary groups to deliver projects for rural communities, as well as supporting Kent's rural environment, productive farmland and protected landscapes. We will also include a commitment to the environment in the wider sense, working towards Kent being net zero by 2050 and the need to adapt to climate change, for example by taking steps to establish sustainable water management.

At the same time as planning for the future the council deals with the never-ending day-to-day challenges which arise. In recent weeks our highways team worked round the clock to manage the traffic congestion

on the county's roads, stemming from the problems at the port of Dover. Children's services continue to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers. Alongside our district partners and various agencies across the county we have been preparing to welcome Ukrainian refugees who have now started arriving in Kent. The work includes carrying out checks on families who have offered accommodation, welfare checks and follow-up visits, processing payments for both hosts and guests, finding school places for the children and offering mental health support. Full details are available on the KCC website at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/support-for-ukrainian-nationals>

10. Borough councillor's report – Cllr William Howard

Since the last of these joint meetings the world has gone through so many events together and viewpoints have changed beyond anything most of us could have imagined.

At Ashford Borough Council the majority of the work has been to support residents as much as possible in doing this while trying to ensure as many of the services we provide continue. ABC have acted on behalf of the Government giving out grants to business and local organisations, coordinated support of vulnerable residents, while also playing our part in welcoming refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and now sadly Ukraine.

As part of the aftermath of COVID-19 I have been work with councillors to develop strategies that will help our local economy recover and ensure that Ashford is a go to destination for job creators and has top facilities for all residents both new and existing. The recent announcements about Newton Works and Brompton Bicycles are just two examples of this successful approach. Often we are told by parties interested in Ashford that it is Ashford's "Can do" attitude that is helping our success and getting us noticed. This is a significant change from the old days of "Trashford" and I really believe we should be so much more proud of where we live than constantly looking for ways to put us all down.

Importantly, my primary focus at Ashford Borough Council representing Bircholt Ward has been to ensure that this growth has the environment close to its heart and that Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality must play a central part in any decisions made. Also, that any growth in borough shows benefits to all residents. This has been successful with ABC launching its Carbon Neutrality Action Plan to ensure Ashford is playing its part to combat the climate emergency.

I could not give a report without mentioning planning and throughout this last period many challenges have been faced with the realm of planning. I have supported numerous residents with planning application both for and against and at least for the vast majority of the time I am pleased to say that it has been in strong partnership with the Parish Councils. The Stodmarsh issue is still causing chaos and confusion with planning in the Borough but there is hope that a pathway to a solution is now starting to be illuminated. However, during this time we must remain vigilant that with the opening up of building again that rogue developers do not decide to take the opportunity to place unnecessary developments in our ward.

Overall, even through the struggles we have all faced these past couple of years it has been heartening to witness the massive heart our community has and how much we have actually come together as a community. Over the next year I will continue to represent the ward and expect to be working with councillors on how ABC can support residents with the cost of living crisis, the bin collection service that is due for renewal soon and we can ensure that green spaces in our communities are more formally protected.

11. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

Cllr Herrick noted that for 2 relatively small parishes, we do a lot. To continue, we need to encourage younger people to come forward.

George Taylor noted that on 4/6 at South Port, Pound Lane, there will be an afternoon tea served for the Platinum Jubilee on behalf of the RAFA and RBL.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

End of Year Accounts for Smeeth Parish Council - current account

1st APRIL 2021 - 31st MARCH 2022

RECEIPTS	£	PAYMENTS	Total
Brought forward	£ 77,639.36	Office 365 for laptop	£ 59.99
Precept	£ 23,738.00	HMRC	£ 811.80
Interest	£ 8.65	Clerk's salary	£ 3,248.36
Fordred's Charity	£ 200.00	Litter picker's salary	£ 1,229.58
Rent of land	£ 350.00	Kent Association of Local Councils	£ 393.22
VAT reclaim	£ 2,777.27	Village Caretaker's Account	£ 3,260.00
Concurrent Function	£ 334.00	PMC Polythene Ltd - dog poo bags	£ 442.50
		S Lister - Internal Audit	£ 60.00
		Zurich Municipal	£ 758.25
		Village Caretaker's Account - VAT Reclaim	£ 2,355.47
		Information Commissioners Office	£ 40.00
		PKF Littlejohn LLP - external audit	£ 360.00
		KCC - speed survey	£ 285.00
		Clerks expenses	£ 215.60
		Parish Online	£ 45.00
		BWP Creative Ltd	£ 230.40
		Fordreds Charity	£ 200.00
		Palmstead Nurseries - replacement tree	£ 96.00
		Fast Hosts - Domain hosting	£ 50.35
		Brabourne and Smeeth Scouts and Guides	£ 500.00
		Village Hall Association	£ 1,500.00
		Playing Fields Association	£ 1,000.00
Caretaker account			
Log selling	£ 111.00	Fuel Genie - Diesel	£ 2,023.92
Brook	£ 2,620.00	DVLA	£ 275.00
Brabourne	£ 7,610.00	Green Flag	£ 115.00
Smeeth	£ 3,260.00	Van MOT and repairs	£ 727.02
Mersham	£ 8,270.00	HMRC	£ 4,724.93
VAT Refund	£ 2,355.47	KCC Pension Fund	£ 7,238.36
Brook Museum	£ 735.00	Kent Plant Services	£ 82.94
Ashford Borough Council	£ 5,000.00	Lister Wilder	£ 410.51
KCC	£ 8,883.56	Caretaker - expenses	£ 385.53
Smeeth School	£ 3,150.00	Mobile Payment	£ 50.00
cheque written back	£ 108.00	Caretaker salary	£ 17,930.29
		Administration expenses	£ 129.83
		T Denne and Sons - lock up	£ 1,296.00
		Zurich insurance	£ 260.34
	£ 69,510.95		£ 52,791.19
			£ 94,359.12
	£ 147,150.31		£ 147,150.31

End of Year Accounts for Brabourne Parish Council - all accounts

1st APRIL 2021 - 31st MARCH 2022

RECEIPTS	£	PAYMENTS	Total
Brought forward	£30,131.76	BWP Creative Limited - website	£ 230.40
Ashford Borough Council	40000.00	Ashford Borough Council - loan + interest	£ 20,684.00
Elmsted PC towards course	58.57	Brabourne C of E School - John Moreton	£ 50.00
Allotment	1275.00	Caretaker Account	£ 7,610.00
Fordred's	200.00	Clerks expenses	£ 326.74
Wayleave	43.22	Countryside Fencing - Allotments	£ 1,200.00
Interest	0.52	Litterpicker's salary	£ 1,648.35
VAT reclaim	385.35	Flowers to the Hickmott Family	£ 35.00
		Fordred's	£ 200.00
		Glasdon	£ 926.61
		HMRC	£ 18.80
		Information Commissioners Office	£ 40.00
		KALC - annual membership	£ 573.00
		Lushland Ltd - tree inspection	£ 430.00
		PKF Littlejohn	£ 240.00
		Playing fields association	£ 2,100.00
		Rush Community Sports	£ 300.00
		S Lister - Internal Audit	£ 60.00
		Scouts and Guides	£ 300.00
		Smeeth PC - 50% of dog poo bags and laptop expenses	£ 209.73
		South East water	£ 239.52
		St Mary's Brabourne	£ 500.00
		Clerk's salary	£ 6,074.92
		Village Hall	£ 2,550.00
		Zurich Municipal	£ 493.00
	£41,962.66		£ 47,040.07
			£ 25,054.35
	£72,094.42		£ 72,094.42